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Three Essays On,

The Reality of Art.

(TITLE)

BY

Brent A. Sparlin

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
Master of Arts

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1978

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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ADVISER

May 12, 1978
DATE

DEPARTMENT HEAD

THE REALITY OF ART

BY

BRENT A. SPARLIN

B. A. in Art, Blackburn College, 1976

ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Art at the Graduate School
of Eastern Illinois University

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS
1978

Three essays make up the main body of the thesis. The essays, Can Art Really Be Real?, The Artist's Role and The Artist's Role in Society, Part II: Silence, each deal with specific subjects which when combined, explain the thesis' title, The Reality of Art.

The first essay, Can Art Really Be Real? is an attempt to clarify what is real from what is unreal in art. The essay deals first with representational realism (such as is found in the work of Thomas Eakins), and defines artists who strive for exact renderings of objects as being illusionistic and not realistic. They create an illusion of reality but not reality.

The importance of the artwork being a reality in itself is stressed. Artists such as Ad Reinhardt, Jasper Johns, Frank Stella and Joseph Beuys, are used to illustrate this point of the artwork being an object. Importance is also placed upon the idea that neither abstract or representational art is any more real than the other, but that both must create a new reality for the viewer. This new reality is stressed in the last paragraph of the essay, as an artwork which in some way presents the public with a novel way of comprehending their visual surroundings.

The second essay, The Role of the Artist, is a search for the artist's place in society. Society's attitude towards the artist, as well as the artist's attitude towards society, makes up the main thrust of the essay.

The artist who is aloof from the populace is regarded as being useless to society, thereby endangering his role in that society. But the artist who attempts to please and entertain the public is regarded as being no less dangerous. The artist's role is held to be that of an educator, one who attempts to spur society towards visual awareness. He cannot achieve this by divorcing himself from society, or by pleasing society, but only by working with the public and challenging them to raise themselves up to the artist's vision, instead of the artist lowering himself to the vision of the populace.

The third and final essay is an extension of the second essay.

The Role of the Artist, Part II: Silence, deals with the artist's obligation towards the education of society. His role as mystic or medium is stressed as is his obligation of silence. This obligation is towards the viewer, who often seeks for explanations from the artist, to expedite his understanding. This is viewed as being detrimental to the total effect of the work, depriving the viewer of his own interpretation by substituting the artist's. This eliminates the element of creative thinking, which is viewed as being of primary importance to visual awareness and communication.

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INTRODUCTION

During the past two years I have constantly questioned the validity of art. The turmoils and strife that are ever present in our world led me to wonder whether art had any significance at all, other than merely decorative.

The three essays included in this collection are what I currently feel to be the answers to this question of validity. They attempt to establish the importance of the artist to society, and the actual role that he fills.

In presenting these writings I have taken a somewhat unorthodox approach, but one which I feel is cogent to the topic. Following the text I have included writings from my notebooks, which reflect my concerns in relation to art. I have included them in the rough form for mainly aesthetic reasons. They are meant to be viewed not only as writings but also as drawings; the script becomes the line. At times reading may be difficult, but as it often takes some sort of hindrance in order for one to become involved, I feel that this is a necessary part of the work.

CAN ART REALLY BE REAL?

A work of art ought to be a thing added to the world of things rather than a reflection of things that already exist.¹

Harold Rosenberg

Realism has always been a paradoxical subject. What is real? What is unreal? Neither have been sufficiently defined so that a clear cut boundary is exposed. What is real for one person may be entirely unreal for another. Philosophers and laymen alike have discussed this question for centuries and still no more satisfactory answer has been given than Descarte's profound utterance, "I think therefore I am."²

This predicament not only abounds in philosophical circles, but is also found in the world of art. From Courbet to the present there has constantly been warfare,³ (frequently closeted, but at times open), between the so called realists and those who have failed to achieve what was respectably called reality.⁴ As art moved further away from representational subject matter the battle became more open, and the differences more apparent. No longer was the realism of Thomas Eakins' considered radical when compared with that of Messonier, but now it was the realism of Cezanne (yes, realism), that was challenging Eakins' concept.

But was Cezanne's approach to painting that of realism?

Eakins was then considered to be so realistic as to be appalling in that he refused to glorify or improve upon his subjects' physical characteristics. Instead, he strove for complete reality. Eakins went to great lengths to insure that his paintings were "real", studying the human figure fervently, so as to understand its inner workings. His painting of The Gross Clinic is a perfect example of his aim.

The Gross Clinic, had a dramatically unfavorable reception, being rejected for the exhibition in Philadelphia's Centennial Exhibition of 1876, a rejection comparable to Courbet's earlier one in Paris, and for much the same reason: its realism seemed brutal. It remains a startling picture today, especially in the detail of Doctor Gross's hand holding the scalpel. The fingers glistened from the incision in the patient's thigh.⁵

In many ways Eakins' approach to reality parallels that of the contemporary sculptor, Duane Hanson, whose cast figures give off such an air of reality that they are often mistaken as such.⁶ His work is a great example of illusionism; but is it real?

In dealing with the present day realists, or "photo-realists", Robert Hughes stated that "It is not fundamentally about reality at all, only about signs."⁷ Reality must not be confused with illusionism, which seems to be the prevalent concern of such artists as Hanson and Eakins. Trickery becomes legitimate and the technique is raised to a higher pedestal. It fools the eye and mirrors reality, but fails to become reality.

This failure to become reality, by use of illusionism, raises the question, what is reality in art? John Cage, the avant garde composer and philosopher, states that: "the function of art is to imitate nature in the manner of operation."⁸ Cage does not state that the function of art is to imitate the outward appearance of nature, but to imitate her manner of operation. With this in mind, Duane Hanson's lifelike or illusionistic figures, are less real than de Kooning's abstractions, which are created without any desire to imitate a recognizable image verbatim. This struggle of the artist, creating from within himself and in conjunction with his environment, his psychology and materials, all add up to a closer involvement with the creative process; the making of an actual object, hence a reality. Frank Stella refers to this reality:

My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there is there. It really is an object. Any painting is an object and anyone who gets involved enough in this finally has to face up to the objectness of what ever it is that he is doing. He is making a thing. All that should be taken for granted. If the painting were lean enough, accurate enough, or right enough, you would just be able to look at it. All I want anyone to get out of them is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion... What you see is what you see.⁹

Growing numbers of artists have rallied around this statement, rejecting the image and striving for the pure "objectness" of the painting. Such artists as Brice Marden, Robert Ryman and Agnes Martin, have taken this approach, while the late Ad Reinhardt went as far as to reject even color and design in his paintings, so that they truly became objects.¹⁰

This should by no means be mistaken as an assault against representational, or image, art. The work of Jasper Johns (which has largely been image oriented), revolves around such subject matter as flags, targets, maps, and most recently, herringbones. Yet he openly admits that these images were used only to solve compositional problems, thereby allowing him to focus his attention on other aspects of painting.¹¹ Statements given by Johns attest to this idea of the "objectness" of art.

I personally would like to keep the painting in a state of 'shunning statement', so that one is left with the fact that one can experience individually as one pleases, that is, not to focus the attention in one way, but to leave the situation as a kind of actual thing. So that the experience of it is variable.¹²

Artists who use objects, or recognizable images, in their art are no less valid or real, than those of more abstract persuasions. The question is not representation versus abstraction, but real versus unreal; nature against the unnatural. Artists such as Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenberg, and Joseph Beuys (all image oriented in their work), have taken the image and presented it in such a way that it creates an entirely new vision for the viewer. They are not bedazzled or forced to admire the technical wizardry involved (for art should be more than technique), but instead, they are faced with images that defy their everyday notions of reality.

Oldenberg's soft sculpture of french fries,¹³ and other everyday objects, are not created in order to render them as we see them. But it is

an attempt to change our way of seeing. The sculptures are created in such a way that not only can we perceive them as a series of falling shoe string potatoes, but we also see them as striking sculptural forms. In this way, Oldenberg transforms the image into something other than a french frie.

Both Rauschenberg and Beuys confront us in like manner. In Rauschenberg's case, everyday materials, such as pillows, tires, etc., are used in a juxtaposed manner, to create almost a sermon in seeing.¹⁴ They show us a multitude of new aesthetic possibilities in objects we often dismiss or discard. Beuys goes one step further, by creating momentary forms of art with his performances, in which such concepts as How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare, are realized.

In How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare, Beuys covered his head with honey and goldleaf, transforming himself into a sculpture. He cradled the dead hare in his arms and took it "to pictures and I explained to him everything that was to be seen. I let him touch the pictures with his paws and meanwhile talked to him about them... I explained them to him because I do not really like explaining them to people. Of course there is a shadow of truth in this. A hare comprehends more than many human beings with stubborn rationalism... I told him that he needed only to scan the picture to understand what is really important about it. The hare probably knows better than man, that directions are important, you know the hare can turn on a dime. And actually nothing else is involved."¹⁵

By combining such materials as honey, goldleaf and a dead hare, with his movements and explanations of paintings, Beuys shocks us into thought.

In all art, whether it be the minimal abstractions of Ad Reinhardt, or the performances of Joseph Beuys, the importance does not lie in either the abstractness or the imagery, but instead, in their reality. The artist must present to his public a new way of comprehending their visual surroundings. The artist who fails in this respect, fails as an artist.

FOOTNOTES

1. Harold Rosenberg, The Anxious Object (New York: Horizon Press, 1964), p. 62.
2. "I suppose, then, that all the things that I see are false; I persuade myself that not-being has ever existed of all that my fallacious memory represents to me. I consider that I possess no senses; I imagine that body, figure, extension, movement and place are but fictions of my mind. What, then, can be esteemed as true? Perhaps nothing at all... Yes, I hesitate, for... am I too dependent on body and senses that I cannot exist without these? But I was persuaded that there was nothing in all the world, that there was no heaven, no earth, that there were no minds, nor any bodies: was I not then likewise persuaded that I did not exist? Not at all; of a surety I myself did exist since I persuaded myself of something, (or merely because I thought of something), But there is some deceiver or other, very powerful and very cunning, who ever employs his ingenuity in deceiving me. Then without doubt I exist also if he deceived me, and let him deceive me as much as he will, he can never cause me to be nothing so long as I think that I am something. So that after having reflected well and carefully examined all things, we must come to the definite conclusion that this proposition: I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time that I pronounce it, or that I mentally conceive it."

Rene' Descartes, Meditations of First Philosophy; Cogito Ergo Sum, Vol. II of W. T. Jones, A History of Western Philosophy (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Bruce and World, Inc., 1952), p. 667.

3. "A Burial at Ornans, is an impressive picture, huge, sober, richly and conscientiously painted, a prodigious technical demonstration without fireworks. It is irreproachable as a demonstration of the academic virtues of sound draughtsmanship, and it is more than adequate as a composition.

But the attacks on it were virulent. Without much question the obligations were quite arbitrary, being inspired more by Courbet's personal presumptuousness than by the inherent nature of the painting. Courbet had observed the simple people around the grave most sympathetically, but for the picture to have been labeled "socialistic" for this reason seems fantastic. Nevertheless this happened, and Stone-breakers, in the same Salon, showing a laborer and a ragged boy at this work, was given the same tag. Both subjects were unusual, and in both pictures common people were represented without the sentimentality or condescension that would have made them acceptable to Salon taste. Compared with the prettified subjects alongside them on the walls of the exhibition, Courbet's peasants seemed like brutes, and the painter's normal sympathetic attitude toward them was found to be socially and politically offensive."

John Canaday, Mainstreams of Modern Art (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1959), pp.108-109.

4. "Reality is ostensibly granted a sovereign position only to be more readily thrown out. Art is reduced to nothing. It serves and by serving becomes a slave. Only those who keep from describing reality will be praised as realistic. The others will be censured, with the approval of the former. Renown, which in Bourgeois society consisted in not being read or in being misunderstood, will in a totalitarian society consist in keeping others from being read. Once more true art will be distorted or gagged and universal communication will be made impossible by the very people who most passionately wanted it."

Albert Camus, "The Artist in His Time - Create Dangerously," Resistance, Rebellion, and Death (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 261.

5. John Canaday, Mainstreams of Modern Art (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1959), p. 320.
6. "Many stories testify to the versimilitude of the pieces. A thief in an art gallery in Palm Beach, Florida, stumbled into a man in worker's clothes standing there in the dark and turned away terrified, to run into the waiting arms of the local police; the worker was a Hanson product. A cleaning lady called police at Kent State University in Ohio, when she failed to rouse Hanson's

Man Dozing in a Chair, and when police pulled a gun on him and he remained motionless, she cried, "My God, he's dead!" and fainted."

Ray Bongartz, "It's the Real Thing," Horizon Magazine, Vol. 20, No. 1 (September, 1977), p. 73.

7. Robert Hughes, "An Omniverous and Liberal Dependence," Arts Magazine, Vol. 48, No. 9 (June, 1974), pp. 25-29.
8. John Cage, A Year from Monday (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), p. 30.
9. Bruce Glaser, "Questions to Stella and Judd," Art News, Vol. 65, No. 5 (September, 1966), pp. 55-61.
10. "...the case of Ad Reinhardt's particularly illuminating, the analysis, purification of painting, that he conducted through different styles in his entire work, ultimately led him to his black-square painting. These are kept from being perceived as objects through their minimal bysymmetrical composition and their completely tuned down colors. However, all the characteristics that were associated with "painting", such as imagery, expression, composition, decorativeness and chromatic qualities, have been eliminated from his work as nonessential. Reinhart has proved that a painting can, most convincingly, exist only as a painting and nothing else; in so doing he definitely closed the road for all artists concerned with a rigorous analysis of what painting essentially is."

Ian Dunlop, The Shock of the New (New York, St. Louis, San Francisco: American Heritage Press, Division of McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), p. 7.

11. "Using the design of the American flag took care of a great deal for me because I didn't have to design it. So I went on to similar things like the targets - things the mind already knows. That gave me room to work on other levels."

Jasper Johns

Michael Crichton, Jasper Johns (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1977), p. 28.

12. Leo Steinberg, Jasper Johns (New York: Wittenborn, Inc., 1963), p. 28.

13. Claes Oldenberg, Shoestring Potatoes Spilling from a Bag (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1966), Canvas filled with kapok, painted with glue and Liquitex, 180 inches high by 46 inches deep.

14. "I really feel sorry for people who think things like soap dishes or mirrors or Coke bottles are ugly, because they're surrounded by things like that all day long, and it must make them miserable."

Robert Rauschenberg

Calvin Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors (New York: Viking Press, 1965), included in Readings in American Art 1900 - 1975, ed. Barbara Rose (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975).

15. Douglas Davis, "Pied Piper," Newsweek, Vol. LXXLX, No. xviii (May 1, 1972), p. 87.

THE ARTIST'S ROLE

I am for an art that takes its form from the lines of life, that twists and extends impossibly and accumulates and spits and drips, and is sweet and stupid as life itself. I am for an artist who vanishes, turning up in a white cap painting signs in hallways.

I am for art that comes out of a chimney like black hair and scatters in the sky. I am for an art that spills out of an old man's purse when he is bounced off a passing fender. I am for the art out (of) a doggy's mouth, falling five floors from the roof. I am for art that flaps like a flag, or helps blow noses, like a handkerchief. I am for art that is put on and taken off, like pants, which is eaten like a piece of pie.

I am for art you can sit on... I am for art that is flipped on and off with a switch. I am for art that unfolds like a map, that you can squeeze like you, your sweetie's arm, kiss like a pet dog. Which expands and squeeks like an accordion, which you can spill your dinner on, like an old tablecloth. I am for an art you can hammer with, stitch with, sew with, paste with, file with. I am for an art that tells you the time of day and which helps old ladies across the street.

I am for the art of red and white gasoline pumps and blinking biscuit signs. I am for the art of old plaster and new enamel. I am for the art of slag and black coal and dead birds. I am for the art of scratchings in asphalt. I am for the art of bending and kicking and breaking them and by pulling on them, making them fall down. I am for the art of sat-on bananas.

I am for the art of underwear and the art of taxicabs. I am for the art of ice cream cones dropped on concrete. I am for the blinking arts, lighting up the night. I am for falling, splashing, wiggling, jumping, going on and off. I am for the KOOL ART, 7-UP ART, PEPSI ART, SUNKIST ART, DRO-bomp ART, Van Art, Pamryl Art, SAN-O-MED ART; 39 cents art, and 9.99 art.

I am for the white art of refrigerators and their muscular openings and closings... I am for the art of decapitated teddy bears, exploded umbrellas, chairs with their brown bones broken,

burning xmas trees, fire cracker ends, pigeon bones, and boxes with men sleeping in them. I am for the art of hung, bloody rabbits and wrinkly chickens, tambourines, and plastic phonographs, and abandoned boxes tied like pharaohs.¹

Claes Oldenberg

The role of the artist in society is a much disputed subject.

The artist is constantly forced to defend himself from those who claim that his work has little or no value in society unless it depicts objects or subjects which please and entertain the populace. In Resistance, Rebellion and Death, Albert Camus states that "if it (art) adapts itself to what the majority of our society wants, art will be a meaningless recreation."² Every artist is forced to decide for himself what his role is in society. The one who paints for the public is often well respected, rewarded and made into a stalwart member of the community. Even artists who are, at one time, considered radical or extremists, are later celebrated and become highly recognized, while their art lapses into conformity; a conformity which is embraced by the so-called intelligentsia. However, the artist must not and can not look down upon society, for he too is a member of that society.

The artist who confines himself to an "Ivory Tower" and creates only out of and for himself, is of little or no value to society. His role is one of negation, indifference and most damaging of all, ignorance. He does not attempt to bring anything from himself to others, but looks upon them with contempt. Yet artists who are often the most diligent in creating for society are often accused of this ivory tower image.³ The

moment an artist attempts to investigate new ways of visual learning, he is often taunted by cries for conformity. As Antoni Tapies, the spanish painter has stated, "the artist must never lower himself in a supposed attempt to speak at the popular level, but should instead require the people to rise up to his vision."⁴ The artist must attempt to bring in a novel and fresh way of viewing existence. He should create a new reality.

In creating a reality, he attempts to stimulate the visual responses of society. Robert Rauschenberg's statement that "his art is an invitation to look elsewhere"⁵ is a perfect definition of the artist's role among the populace. He must open their eyes to the world and to the subtle nuances which are continually in flux, affecting the framework of existence. What the artist should strive for is an awakening of the intellect and a revitalization of the questioning attitude.

With his statement, Claes Oldenberg pleads for acknowledgement that all things can be art. Every object, every experience, and every concept, must be given the status of having the potential to be art. The aesthetics of a rusty beer can or a dirty sneaker are of no less value than those which emerge from out of the artist's studio. It is the artist's obligation to deliver this message.

FOOTNOTES

1. Claes Oldenberg, Environments, Situations, Spaces (New York: the Martha Jackson Gallery, 1961), catalogue of an exhibition at the Martha Jackson Gallery.
2. Albert Camus, "The Artist and His Time - Create Dangerously," Resistance, Rebellion, and Death (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 253.
3. "Art lives only on the constraints it imposes on itself: it dies of all others. Conversely, if it does not constrain itself it indulges in ravings and becomes a slave to mere shadows. The freest art and the most rebellious will therefore be the most classical; it will reward the greatest effort. So long as a society and its artists do not accept this long and free effort, so long as they relax in the comfort of amusements or the comfort of conformism, in the games of art for art's sake or the preachings of realistic art, its artists are lost in nihilism and sterility. Saying this amounts to saying that today the rebirth depends on our courage and our will to be lucid."
- Albert Camus, "The Artist and His Time - Create Dangerously," Resistance, Rebellion, and Death (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 268.
4. Judith Rohrer, "A Theme for Reflection: The Recent Work of Antoni Tapies," Arts Magazine, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December, 1975), p. 62.
5. Judith Rohrer, "A Theme for Reflection: The Recent Work of Antoni Tapies," Arts Magazine, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December, 1975), p. 62.
6. "The reason I am less and less interested in music is not only that I find environmental sounds and noises more useful aesthetically than the sounds produced by the world's musical

cultures, but that, when you get right down to it a composer is simply someone who tells other people what to do. I find this an unattractive way of getting things done."

John Cage, A Year from Monday (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), p. ix.

7. "Art and life are identical...the key to changing things is to unlock the creativity in every man. When each man is creative beyond right and left political parties, he can revolutionize time...Man you have the strength of self determination."

Joseph Beuys

Carl Belz, "Joseph Beuys - American Debut," Art in America, Vol. 60, No. 5 (October, 1972), pp. 102-103.

THE ARTIST'S ROLE

Part II: Silence

Words are a terrible strait jacket. It's interesting how many prisoners of that strait jacket resent its being loosened or taken off. There's a side to the human personality that somehow senses that wherever the cosmic truth may lie, it doesn't lie in A, B, C, D.¹

Stanly Kubrick

The constant need for definition in art is a most maddening, and in many ways, destructive effort. Artists are constantly torn between the need to express themselves and the true goal of education.

The questions which the viewer almost invariably asks the artist, such as "what is he trying to say?" and "that's art?" are a persistent thorn in his side. These questions are rarely asked with any real sincerity, but are merely ways of testing the validity of the artist. If he is lucid and speaks with seeming intelligence, well, then he must know what he is talking about, and is worth listening to. If the artist is vague and hesitant, well, then the viewer is not quite certain.

The western mind is constantly searching for clarity. Clean, precise, clear cut answers for every question are demanded; rationality prevails. It is in this state of rationality that the artist is judged. He must fit into a niche, a clean, precise, clear cut niche. But how many artists are able to fit into that niche? For all of society's so-called

rationality, the artist remains a decidedly irrational being. The attempt of the public to completely understand the work of the artist, in his own terms, will end in failure. Indeed the artist's own quest for full understanding of what he does ends in a like manner.²

Artists such as William Blake, immediately inspire connotations with mysticism. Blake's own attitude was that his greatest periods of creativity occurred while he was possessed by spirits.³ This is too often dismissed as being merely idiopathic, when in fact it is more widespread than one first imagines. The role of the mystic has been readily filled by such diverse artists as Pieter Brueghel, Albrecht Durer, John Fuseli, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Arshile Gorky and many others. Bruce Nauman's neon sculpture The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths⁴ is only an affirmation of the artist's role as mystic. While Mark Tobey's involvement with the orient and his conversion to the Bahai' faith not only illustrates a sort of mysticism,⁵ but it also tends to define the artist as a spiritual being (as does Wassily Kandinsky's Concerning the Spiritual in Art).⁶ The artist takes on the mantle of a medium between the spirits and society.

This attitude of the artist as a medium should not separate, but instead reaffirm his position in society. The role of the medium attests to the importance of the artist as educator. Even an artist as divorced from the emotionalism so often associated with mysticism as Marcel Duchamp, referred to the artist as medium and educator.

The artist is a mediumistic being, who does not really know what he is doing or why he is doing it. It is the spectator who through a kind of, 'inner osmosis', deciphers and interprets the work's inner qualifications, relates them to the external world and thus completes the creative cycle. The spectators contribution is consequently equal in importance to the artist's and perhaps in the long run even greater.⁷

Duchamp's belief in the importance of the spectator as a creative force relates to the zen approach to spiritual education.

After a long and arduous journey a young japanese man arrived deep in a forest where the teacher of his choice was living in a small house he had made. When the student arrived the teacher was sweeping up fallen leaves. Greeting his master, the young man received no greeting in return. And to all his questions there were no replies. Realizing there was nothing he could do to get the teacher's attention, the student went to another part of the same forest and built himself a house. Years later, when he was sweeping up fallen leaves, he was enlightened. He dropped everything, ran through the forest to his teacher, and said, "Thank you."⁸

This method of forcing the student to learn on their own is an attitude that the artist must take, when confronted by those who seek explanations. Through the process of interpretation, the artist not only destroys the enigma of his work, but he also creates an impossibility for the viewer in conceiving his own responses and opinions towards the work. The viewer should be forced into thought, into realizing his own responses to the work.⁹ If the viewer fails because of the artist's verbal involvement, the artist has not only ceased to do his job, but he may have seriously damaged his usefulness to society, by condoning non-thinking.

Just as it is the artist's obligation to create so as to cause question and create perplexities, it is the viewer's obligation to honestly become involved with his responses. Answers should come to the viewer through his own efforts and findings, and in response to their past, present and future.

FOOTNOTES

1. R. Buckminster Fuller, I Seem to be a Verb (New York, London, Toronto: Bantam Books, 1970), 175A
2. "There is a great deal of intention in painting, it's rather unavoidable. But when a work is let out by the artist and said to be complete, the intention loosens. Then it's subject to all kinds of use and misuse and pun. Occasionally someone will see the work in a way that even changes its significance for the person who made it; the work is no longer "intention", but the thing being seen and someone responding to it. They will see it in a way that makes you think, that is a possible way of seeing it. Then you, as the artist can enjoy it--that's possible--or you can lament it. If you like, you can try to express the intention more clearly in another work... If an artist makes something--or if you make chewing gum and everybody ends up using it as glue, whoever made it is given the responsibility of making glue, even if what he really intends is chewing gum. You can't control that kind of thing."

Jasper Johns

Barbara Rose (ed.), Readings in American Art; 1900 - 1975
(New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 148

3. "But Blake's visions, coming to him at uncertain intervals during a long life, appearing now by night and now by day--always, so far as we know, while he was awake--suggested a vast symbolic myth to him, containing a whole language of names and personages, and telling by fits and starts a narrative whose apparent incoherence veils a unity of significance that becomes more astonishing and fascinating the more closely it is studied."

Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats, The Works of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic, Critical (15 Piccadilly, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), Vol. I

4. Bruce Nauman, Window or Wall Sign: The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, 1967), blue and peach neon tubing. 59" x 55"

5. "I've been influenced by the Bahai' religion which believes there has been but one religion which renews itself under different names. The root of all religions, from the Bahai' point of view, is based on the theory that man will gradually come to understand the unity of the world and the oneness of mankind. It teaches that all the prophets are one--that science and religion are the two great powers which must be balanced if man is to become mature. I feel my work has been influenced by these beliefs. I've tried to decentralize and interpenetrate so that all parts of a painting are of related value. Perhaps I've hoped even to penetrate perspective and bring the far near."

Mark Tobey

Katherine Kuh, "Painter Meets Critic", Saturday Review, XLIII, No. 27 (July 2, 1960), p. 32.

6. Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, the Documents of Modern Art, director Robert Motherwell (New York: Wittenborn, Inc., 1947).
 7. Calvin Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors (New York: Viking Press, 1965), p. 9
 8. John Cage, Silence (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 85.
 9. "Suppose he (Duchamp) had not been disturbed by some question I had asked, and had answered it. I would then have had his answer rather than my experiences."
- John Cage, "John Cages, of Marcel Duchamp," Art in America, Vol. 61, No. 6 (November 1973), p. 74.
10. "Personal experience, therefore is everything. No ideas are intelligible to those who have no backing of experience. This is a platitude. A baby has no ideas, for its mentality is not yet so developed as to experience anything in the way of ideas. If it has them at all, they must be something extremely obscure and blurred and not in correspondence with realities. To get the clearest and most efficient understanding of a thing, therefore, it must be experienced personally. Especially when the thing is concerned with life itself, personal experience is an absolute

necessity. Without this experience nothing relative to its profound working will ever be accurately and therefore efficiently grasped. The foundation of all concepts is simple, unsophisticated experience. "

D. T. Suzuki, An Introduction to Zen Buddhism (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1974), p. 33.

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Perhaps I am a bit of a dabbler


My work is very contemplative -
 - much like Pollock or a Japanese
 Artist - Always attempting to gain
 some knowledge - A painting or
 work of Art is no more the
 decoration if it fail to teach
 us anything.

These things are
 not always as ~~conscious~~ acquired
 consciously and have trouble
 in explanations. Did I
 learn to scumble? Mix Color -
 - No these are not important -
 - What did I learn about
 myself - Upon moving
 to Charleston my work became
 tighter more controlled - a
 time of ANXIETY - as I have
 adapted a certain looseness
 has been showing it self.
 But is this all - is this
 the entire ~~scope~~ pursuit of
 knowledge I have acquired

The rips, the glue marks
 the erasures - what do they
 indicate? A certain amount of
 irreverence? perhaps. In ~~less~~
 interests in this type of source?

42 - time goes on - many of
 these questions will soon fade
 away in the ears of the listeners
 many will never be answered -
 Who can explain the strange
 phenomena which occurs
 when one takes the left
 door instead of the right -
 Why does one order a
 piece of chocolate cake instead
 of vanilla - is there some aesthetic
 reason - Yes - he likes it
 Better,

Another thing which
 bothers me about going
 into detailed explanation of
 these drawings is the amount
 of personnel involvement in
 each one

these drawings reveal me —
 — it strikes me odd that I
 should describe something as intimate
 as procession to strangers — too
 sure I would not confide in —
 — I would talk of my sex life to
 my close friends — so it is
 with art — for the most, anyway
 the intimate are the only ones
 who give a damn.



(1) the work — The ~~Artist~~ Builder
 (ARTIST) was not concerned
 about what part of him was
 exposed — But this as
 always MUST be tempered
 with certain sensibility —
 but he is silent...

Why could a line ^(charcoal) and a real ^{and} real lie next
 to one another? — Both
 are real — if the charcoal
 gives off the essence of a
 space — so what if it
 is not AN OBJECT — it
 is A VERY REAL thing

that line too, across
 the other — it crosses
 it physically — it
 addresses — VERY realistic —
 calls to the PAPER
 (Paper spread)

↳ WHO SAYS
 MY DRAWINGS

C. ~~the~~ The main element of art
 is the learning aspect of it —
 — what did I learn from this
 drawing? from doing this drawing —
 — Did I learn how to see a bit
 differently — if not — I have
 missed the mark — ART IS
 A FORM OF EDUCATION
 IN UNDERSTANDING —

C. My paintings are prints, my
 drawings all seem to radiate
 a certain CARINGNESS — which
 in itself shows a great deal of
 concern — my ~~style~~ may not
 be perfect — NOR the lines —
 But my God it's Not Polished

Not Polished till it's dead —
 its alive — if any faults
 are there my ~~drawing~~
 readily acknowledges it
 and accepts it —
 — YES faults are interesting
 — I believe — always have —
 that the faults are generally
 the most interesting piece in

ANT ^{REFINE}
 childish scribbles?? —
 WHO

— NO ONE — who will
 be acknowledged — o o o o



lines are an
 alphabet all to
 themselves —